

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A method, comprising the steps of:

providing a window which is transmissive to radiation having a predetermined wavelength, the window having a chrome layer with an aperture therethrough;

precisely forming an edge of the aperture such that the chrome layer truncates an outermost peripheral edge of image information to be passed through the window;

providing a frame which has an opening therethrough;

providing an annular sealing section between and in contact with each of said window and said frame, said sealing section extending completely around said opening;

heating said window, said frame and said sealing section to a selected temperature at which said sealing section has melted, said selected temperature being lower than melting temperatures of said frame and said window; and

thereafter cooling said window, said frame and said sealing section until said sealing section has solidified and formed between said window and said frame a hermetic seal which extends completely around said opening.

2. (Original) A method according to Claim 1, wherein said step of providing said frame includes the steps of:

using a metal to make said frame; and

oxidizing a surface portion of said metal frame which will be engaged by said sealing section.

3. (Original) A method according to Claim 2, wherein said step of providing said frame includes the step of selecting an ASTM F15 steel material for use as said frame.

4. (Original) A method according to Claim 2, wherein said oxidizing step includes the step of placing said frame in a wet nitrogen furnace while heating said frame.

5. (Original) A method according to Claim 4, wherein said step of heating said frame within said furnace is carried out by heating said frame to a peak temperature in the range of approximately 975°C to 1005°C for a time period in the range of approximately 9 to 13 minutes.

6. (Original) A method according to Claim 4, including prior to said oxidizing step the step of placing said frame in a wet hydrogen furnace while heating said frame.

7. (Original) A method according to Claim 6, wherein said step of heating said frame within said wet hydrogen furnace is carried out by heating said frame to a peak temperature of approximately 1050°C for a time period in the range of approximately 11 to 15 minutes.

8. (Original) A method according to Claim 1, including the step of selecting for use as said window a material which includes a borosilicate glass.

9. (Original) A method according to Claim 1, wherein said step of providing said window includes the step of forming an antireflective coating on a side of said window that will face said frame and be in contact with said sealing section.

10. (Original) A method according to Claim 9, wherein said antireflective coating is one of silicon oxide and magnesium fluoride.

11. (Original) A method according to Claim 1, including the step of selecting a glass material for use in said sealing section.

12. (Previously Presented) A method, comprising the steps of:

providing a window which is transmissive to radiation having a predetermined wavelength;

providing a frame which has an opening therethrough;

providing an annular sealing section between and in contact with each of said window and said frame, said sealing section extending completely around said opening;

heating said window, said frame and said sealing section to a selected temperature at which said sealing section has melted, said selected temperature being lower than melting temperatures of said frame and said window; and

thereafter cooling said window, said frame and said sealing section until said sealing section has solidified and formed between said window and said frame a hermetic seal which extends completely around said opening;

selecting for use in said sealing section first and second glass materials which are different, said first glass material being an annular portion of said sealing section which extends around said opening of said frame in contact with said window and spaced from said frame, said second glass material being an annular portion of said sealing section which extends around said opening of said frame in contact with said frame and spaced from said window, and said first and second glass materials being in contact with each other between said window and frame.

13. (Original) A method according to Claim 12, including the step of selecting for use in said sealing section a third glass material which is different from each of said first and second glass materials, and which is an annular portion of said sealing section that extends around said opening of said frame in contact with each of said frame and said window, said third glass material being disposed on a side of said first and second glass materials nearest said opening in said frame.

14. (Original) A method according to Claim 13, including the step of selecting for use in said sealing section a fourth glass material which is different from each of said first and second glass materials, and which is an annular portion of said sealing section that extends around said opening of said frame in contact with each of said frame and said window, said fourth glass material being disposed on a side of said first and second glass materials remote from said opening in said frame.

15. (Previously Presented) An apparatus, comprising:

a window which is transmissive to radiation having a predetermined wavelength, the window having a chrome layer with an aperture therethrough, an edge of the aperture being precisely formed such that the chrome layer truncates an outermost peripheral edge of image information to be passed through the window;

a frame which has an opening therethrough; and

an annular sealing section which is disposed between and fixedly bonds said window to said frame, said sealing section extending completely around said opening and providing a hermetic seal between said window and said frame at all locations therealong, and said sealing section being configured to melt at a temperature which is lower than melting temperatures of said frame and said window.

16. (Original) An apparatus according to Claim 15, wherein said frame is made of a metal, and

wherein said sealing section contacts a surface portion of said frame which has been oxidized in a wet nitrogen atmosphere.

17. (Original) An apparatus according to Claim 16, wherein said frame is made of an ASTM F15 steel material.

18. (Original) An apparatus according to Claim 15, wherein said window includes a borosilicate glass.

19. (Original) An apparatus according to Claim 15, wherein said window has on a side thereof facing said frame an antireflective coating, said sealing section engaging said antireflective coating.

20. (Original) An apparatus according to Claim 19, wherein said antireflective coating is one of silicon oxide and magnesium fluoride.

21. (Original) An apparatus according to Claim 15, wherein said sealing section includes a glass material.

22. (Previously Presented) An apparatus, comprising:
a window which is transmissive to radiation having a predetermined wavelength;

a frame which has an opening therethrough; and

an annular sealing section which is disposed between and fixedly bonds said window to said frame, said sealing section extending completely around said opening and providing a hermetic seal between said window and said frame at all locations therealong, and said sealing section being configured to melt at a temperature which is lower than melting temperatures of said frame and said window;

wherein said sealing section includes first and second glass materials which are different, said first glass material being an annular portion of said sealing section which extends around said opening of said frame in contact with said window and spaced from said frame, said second glass material being an annular portion of said sealing section which extends around said opening of said frame in contact with said frame and spaced from said window, and said first and second glass materials being in contact with each other between said window and frame.

23. (Original) An apparatus according to Claim 22, wherein said sealing section includes a third glass material which is different from each of said first and second glass materials, and which is an annular portion of said sealing section that extends around said opening of said frame in contact with each of said frame and said window, said third glass material being disposed on a side of each of said first and second glass materials nearest said opening in said frame.

24. (Original) An apparatus according to Claim 23, wherein said sealing section includes a fourth glass material which is different from each of said first and second glass materials, and which is an annular portion of said sealing section that extends around said opening of said frame in contact with each of said frame and said window, said fourth glass material being disposed on a side of each of said first and second glass materials remote from said opening in said frame.